I. Two main purposes of elections
   
   A. Build regime support in both
      
      1. Autocracies with non-competitive elections
      2. Democracies with competitive elections: political efficacy is higher in voters than non-voters and in both voters & non-voters after an election compared to before that same election

   B. Select leaders & policies (the latter through referenda or referendums)

II. Electoral systems
   
   A. Single-member-district (plurality, winner-take-all)
      
      1. Basic principle: each legislative district elects one representative by plurality vote
      2. Usage: found mainly in Britain & its former colonies
      3. Advantage: usually guarantees that one party will win a governing majority in the legislature
      4. Disadvantages:
         a. Reduces the number of competitive parties to only two (unless the parties are concentrated regionally, like Canada, which has 4 major parties, each strong in a different part of the country)
         b. Gives no local representation in any district to those who do not support the winning party’s candidate in that district

   B. Multi-member-district (proportional representation or PR)
      
      1. Basic principle: each legislative district elects more than one representative with the winners chosen in proportion to the votes they receive
      2. Two major variations (there are many others)
         a. Party-list voting
            (1) Definition: parties make lists of candidates to be elected; legislative seats get allocated to each party in proportion to the number of votes the party receives
               (a) Closed list: parties determine the order in which that party’s candidates are elected
               (b) Open list: voters have at least some influence on the order in which a party’s candidates are elected
            (2) Usage: most democracies & the European Parliament
         b. Single-transferable vote (also called preference voting)
            (1) Definition: each voter ranks candidates rather than chooses a party list
            (2) Usage: Republic of Ireland, Ulster, Malta
      3. Advantages of any PR system:
         a. Gives much broader representation of diverse interests in society
         b. Encourages higher voting turnout
      4. Disadvantages of any PR system:
         a. Usually results in a multi-party system with no one party enjoying majority control
         b. The more legislators elected from each district, the more numerous parties there will be, and the less stable the governing multi-party coalition will be

   C. Mixed system: a combination of single-member elections with additional-member adjustments for proportional representation
      
      1. Typical procedure:
         a. Voters vote once for a single district representative (winner-take-all), and a second time for a party
         b. The party balance in the legislature is adjusted proportional to the distribution of second or party votes
      2. Usage: found in Germany, Mexico, and New Zealand

III. Referenda (referendums or plebiscites)
   
   A. Definition: elections in which voters choose whether a proposal is accepted or rejected
      
      1. The proposal may be the adoption of a new constitution, a constitutional amendment, a law, the recall of an elected official or simply a specific government policy.
      2. In the U.S. the term referendum is often reserved for a direct popular vote initiated by a legislature while a vote originating in a petition of citizens is referred to as an initiative, ballot measure or proposition.

   B. National referenda
      
      1. Usage is not widespread
         a. Not used at the national level in the U.S. – but is used in 24 American states (mainly in the west)
         b. Used only once in the U.K. (in 1975 on continued membership of the European Economic Community)
         c. Used infrequently in about 2 dozen democracies (including Australia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Costa Rica, European Union, France, Iraq, Republic of Ireland, Italy, Netherlands, New Zealand, Romania, Serbia, Singapore, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Venezuela)
         d. Used most frequently in France & Switzerland (but, still infrequently)
      2. Advantage: purest form of popular sovereignty – check on government
3. **Disadvantages**
   a. Proposals usually cannot get the detailed and careful consideration by the electorate that they can receive in a legislature
   b. An intense minority can defeat an apathetic majority because of relatively low turnout in many referenda

IV. **Electoral participation (turnout)**
   A. Competing definitions:
      1. (Number of voters) divided by (number of registered voters)
      2. (Number of voters) divided by (number of eligible voters)
      3. (Number of voters) divided by (number of voting-age adults) – *best definition for comparison purposes*
   B. **Factors that influence turnout**
      1. **System-level factors**
         a. Convenience of Election Day(s)
         b. Registration burdens
         c. Difficulty of choices
            (1) Frequency of elections & number of offices on the ballot
                a. Federal v. unitary
                b. Presidential v. parliamentary
            (2) Type of party system (two-party v. multi-party)
      2. **Individual-level factors**
         a. **Socio-demographic**
            (1) Strong predictors in the U.S.: class, age, social connectedness
            (2) Weak predictors in the U.S.: race, region, or gender
         b. **Psychological**
            (1) Strong predictors
                a. Strength of party identification
                b. Level of interest in current campaign
                c. Strength of external political efficacy (opposite = anomie)
            (2) Weak predictor: strength of political trust (opposite = cynicism)
      3. **Legal barriers to voting in the U.S.**
         a. *Former restrictions, no longer imposed*
            (1) Religion
            (2) Class
            (3) Race
            (4) Election of U.S. Senators (17th amendment, 1913)
            (5) Gender (19th amendment, 1920)
            (6) D.C. residency (23rd amendment, 1961)
            (7) Age: 18-20-year-olds were formerly disenfranchised in many states (26th amendment, 1971, set minimum voting age at 18 nationwide)
         b. **Restrictions currently imposed by some or all states**
            (1) Citizenship
            (2) Residence
            (3) Registration
            (4) Felony conviction
            (5) Mental health
      4. **The paradox of participation: individual v. collective motivation**
         a. **Factors encouraging** increased turnout in the U.S.
            (1) Rise of education levels
            (2) Expanded legal access
            (3) Decline of traditional gender roles
         b. **Factors discouraging** turnout in the U.S.
            (1)Decline in external efficacy
            (2) Decline in strength of partisanship
            (3) Decline in social connectedness

V. **The bases of individuals’ electoral choices**
   A. **Short-term factors**
      1. **Issues**
         a. State of the economy (income, unemployment, inflation)
         b. National security
      2. **Candidates** (trustworthiness & competence)
   B. **Long-term factors**
      1. **Individuals’ party identification**
      2. **Other group identifications** (region, class, race/ethnicity, religion, gender, age)